
State of Utah
Department of Human Service
Division of Child and Family Services



Foster and Adoptive Parent Diligent Recruitment Plan
Targeted Plan within the CFSP for FFY 2020 to FFY 2024

APSR Update

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ATTACHMENT D.

Introduction

The Foster and Adoptive Parent Diligent Recruitment Plan was reviewed and APSR updates are found at the end of this document.

The plan is a component of Utah's Child and Family Services Plan for FFY 2020 to FFY 2024. This plan reflects the activities to be conducted over the next five years to ensure that there are foster and adoptive homes that meet the needs of infants, children, youth, and young adults (including those over the age of 18 who are in foster care) served by the child welfare agency.

Development of this plan was informed by the results of Utah's Child and Family Services Review completed in 2018. Utah was found to be in substantial conformity with the systemic factor of Foster and Adoptive Parent Licensing, Recruitment, and Retention. Three of the four items in this systemic factor were rated as Strengths, including Item 31 Standards applied equally, Item 34 Requirements for criminal background checks, and Item 35 Diligent recruitment of foster and adoptive homes. Item 36 State use of cross-jurisdictional resources for permanency placements was found as an area needing improvement. This plan will continue to support successful performance in this systemic factor.

The Division of Child and Family Services (DCFS) contracts with Utah Foster Care Foundation to provide for the diligent recruitment of foster and adoptive families. The recruitment process functions well to ensure that there is a statewide comprehensive process for the diligent recruitment of potential foster and adoptive families who reflect the ethnic and racial diversity of children for whom foster and adoptive homes are needed. Regional recruitment plans are developed based on each region's needs assessment on an annual basis. DCFS also contracts with the Adoption Exchange and Wendy's Wonderful Kids to help with adoption recruitment and placement.

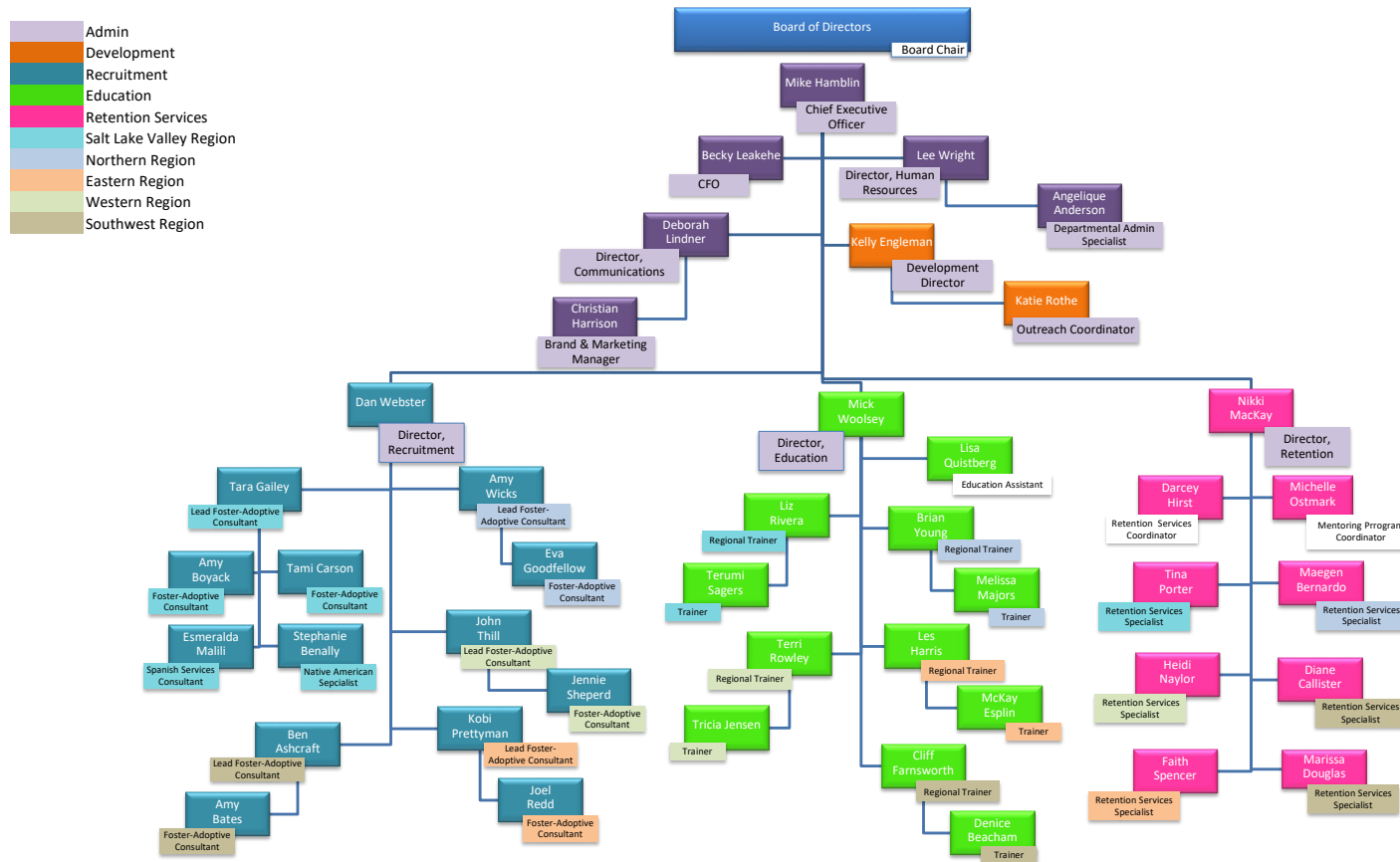
The Utah Foster Care Foundation (UFC) is tasked with the recruitment, training and retaining of families that care for children who are unable to remain in their own homes, known as resource families. UFC recruits and pre-screens families, conducts pre-service/pre-licensure and in-service/post-licensure training, assists in the retention of resource families by coordinating support groups and generalized support services, and advocates on behalf of kinship, foster, and adoptive families. UFC also provides training to kinship caregivers identified by DCFS for care of specific children in foster care.

UFC seeks to improve the lives of vulnerable children placed in foster care through the positive impact of qualified, compassionate and nurturing foster and adoptive resource families. Training implemented statewide is from an evidence-informed curriculum designed to create a solid understanding of trauma-informed care, providing resource families with the knowledge necessary to place trauma at the center of treatment.

UFC's vision is grounded in two primary beliefs. First, a stable and caring family is the best possible environment to care for children in out-of-home care until they can be reunified with their families, placed with a relative, or placed in a permanent adoptive home. Second, UFC believes resource families are essential members of the child welfare service team. In an effort to provide the least trauma to children, UFC will work to develop a network of family foster care that is neighborhood-based, culturally sensitive and located primarily in the communities in which the children live. UFC will seek to replace the families who close their licenses each year and to increase the number of overall quality of foster families to meet projected placement needs. UFC will also develop new and effective ways to support and retain resource families.

Utah also contracts with non-profit agencies throughout the state that have child placing foster care licenses, referred to as proctor care. These agencies recruit and train proctor parents, and also provide support to proctor parents after children in state custody are placed in their care.

Utah Foster Care Foundation Organizational Chart



06/01/2019

Characteristics of Children for Whom Foster and Adoptive Homes Are Needed

During the previous five-year plan period, the total number of children served in foster care per federal fiscal year in Utah fluctuated only slightly from one to three percent per year, with the first and last year of the five-year period being virtually the same. Point in time data for children in foster care showed slightly higher variation from year to year, ranging from 5 to 11% plus or minus. For the next five year period, as efforts to reduce or slow growth in foster care continue, we anticipate that the total children served in foster care will not significantly increase.

The age distribution of children in foster care during at the end of the most recent Federal fiscal year was comprised of about 42% of children age 6 and younger, 40% age 7-12, and about 18% age 16 and older. We do not expect appreciable change in proportion of child age ranges during the next five years when considering needs for foster and adoptive homes.

In the prior plan period, the majority of children in foster care were Caucasian, nearing 90% of the foster care population annually. We anticipate that this will continue to be the case in the next plan period. The percent of children who are African American, American Indian/Alaska Native, and Hispanic are proportionally less prevalent in the foster care population; however, they are overrepresented when compared to their representation in the statewide population.

Due to the implications of these demographics on foster care recruitment, UFC will place much of its focus on recruiting African/American, Native American, or Hispanic resource families. UFC will also focus on locating age appropriate resource families, particularly for youth over the age of 13. Even though this group represents a smaller number than the younger population, finding families for children age 13 and older continues to be a challenge.

Count and Demographics of Children in Foster Care

Number of Children in Foster Care		
FFY	Served During Federal Fiscal Year	End of Federal Fiscal Year September 30
2015	4,750	2,607
2016	4,676	2,728
2017	4,802	2,902
2018	4,719	2,577
2019	4,542	2,479

Children in Custody on September 30, 2019		
Age Group	Count	Percent
Younger Than One Year	223	9.0%
1 to 3 Years	455	18.4%
4 to 6 Years	401	16.2%
10 to 12 Years	295	11.9%
7 to 9 Years	667	26.9%
16 Years and Older	438	17.7%
Total	2,479	

Race and Ethnicity of Children Served in Foster Care										
Race	FFY 2015		FFY 2016		FFY 2017		FFY 2018		FFY 2019	
	Count	Percent	Count	Percent	Count	Percent	Count	Percent	Count	Percent
American Indian or Alaska Native	197	4.1%	197	4.2%	204	4.2%	242	5.1%	223	4.9%
Asian	48	1.0%	44	0.9%	32	0.7%	36	0.8%	36	0.8%
Black or African American	276	5.8%	302	6.5%	316	6.6%	278	5.9%	286	6.3%
Multiracial, Other Race Not Known	46	1.0%	63	1.3%	65	1.4%	53	1.1%	62	1.4%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pac. Islander	64	1.3%	72	1.5%	71	1.5%	89	1.9%	96	2.1%
Unable to Determine	22	0.5%	28	0.6%	34	0.7%	27	0.6%	25	0.6%
White	4,317	90.9%	4,193	89.7%	4,320	90.0%	4,237	89.8%	4,094	90.1%
Total Children Served	4,750		4,676		4,802		4,719		4,542	
Hispanic Origin or Latino	1,021	21.5%	997	21.3%	1,039	21.6%	1,027	21.8%	1,070	23.6%
Note: All child counts are distinct (unduplicated). The percent of children in each race group is calculated on the distinct count of children served during each Federal Fiscal Year. One child may identify as more than one race; therefore, the sum of percentages will not equal 100%.										

Strategies to Reach Out to All Parts of the Community

Through partnership with UFC and other partners, efforts are made to reach out to all parts of the community for recruitment of foster and adoptive families. UFC develops strategies for recruitment through an annual plan developed with each of the five DCFS regions, which cover all counties within the state. The region-specific plans are subject to modification as needs change throughout each year. During the last quarter of each state fiscal year, UFC completes a needs assessment process with each DCFS region. The process includes:

- Compiling regional needs assessment data and providing it to UFC.
- UFC Lead Foster/Adoptive Consultant meeting with the DCFS Region Director or designee and the Foster Care Program Administrator to review data and anecdotal information, and seek input regarding trends.
- UFC staff participates in the DCFS screening and review process for adoptive home studies, placement committee meetings, and other partnering meetings as requested throughout the year, and assesses how anecdotal information matches data from the needs assessment.

Once the needs assessment process is complete and within 30 days of the beginning of the new fiscal year, UFC Lead Foster/Adoptive Consultants develop regional recruitment plans. Regional recruitment plans include the agreed upon recruitment goals for each region and identify specific types of families to recruit to better meet the needs of the children in care (i.e., families for sibling groups, families for children of a certain age range, families of a certain race or culture, etc.).

The plans also include specific activities and methods that will be utilized to achieve recruitment goals. To help with targeted recruitment efforts, UFC will:

- Continue to employ a full-time Spanish-speaking Recruitment Specialist to conduct outreach to the Hispanic community along the Wasatch Front, provide pre-service classes in the Spanish language, mentor Spanish speaking families through the licensing process, and support a Spanish language peer support group.
- Continue to employ a full-time Native American Specialist to conduct outreach to tribes, assist staff statewide with AI/AN recruitment efforts, and mentor AI/AN families through the licensing process.
- Adapt to needs of specific families being recruited, such as utilizing an American Sign Language (ASL) interpreter.

UFC and DCFS regions meet at least bi-annually to review progress toward goals and assess if the needs of the region are being met by the current regional recruitment plan or if the plan needs to be modified, based on new trends for ongoing needs.

Child placing foster care agencies also recruit and train proctor families to care for children in foster care. They typically recruit for proctor parents in the local communities in which these businesses reside.

DCFS actively searches for and provides notification to kin when a child enters DCFS protective custody. When a child cannot safely remain at home, kinship will be the first option. Once a potential kin caregiver is identified, the DCFS kinship team will complete a home study that will go to the Office of Licensing for approval, and the kinship caregiver will be referred to UFC for training and support as a licensed kinship caregiver.

Methods of Disseminating Information about Being a Foster Parent

Activities and methods for disseminating information about being a foster parent are developed as part of the region recruitment plans in conjunction with recruitment goals. Communication may include general information about being a foster parent and may also include examples of child-specific needs that recruitment efforts are targeting, such as sibling groups or members of tribes.

These information dissemination activities may include but are not limited to:

- Local paid media campaigns.
- Solicitation of earned media.
- Social media and social networking.
- Community outreach and education through the development of relationships with local businesses, faith based groups, schools, and other associations and organizations.
- Participation in fairs, festivals, or other relevant community gatherings and celebrations.
- Activities and outreach consistent with MEPA-IEPA and ICWA, focused on increasing culturally relevant placement opportunities representative of the racial/cultural makeup of children in care.

Regional recruitment efforts are supported by the UFC Director of Recruitment, Communications Director, and Marketing Manager. Support includes:

- Maintaining a statewide website (utahfostercare.org).
- Maintaining a statewide social media presence.
- Development of general recruitment materials and messaging consistent with needs identified across all regions.
- Development of region-specific messaging and materials when one region has needs not reflected in the others, as well as event-specific materials for each region, as needed.
- Development of culturally relevant materials targeting diverse populations identified in the regional recruitment plan.
- Development and implementation of a statewide mass media marketing plan, which may include digital advertising, billboards, television, or radio.

Strategies to Assure Access to Agencies that License Foster/Adoptive Parents

The Department of Human Service's Office of Licensing (OL) issues licenses to foster parents, residential treatment facilities, and other child placing agencies utilizing rules established by the State Legislature as listed in Utah Code 62A 2-102. OL has office locations throughout the state, which operate during normal business hours. OL staff work flexible hours to meet the needs of prospective adoptive families. For example, home studies may be conducted on weekends or evenings. OL also maintains a website that is available 24 hours per day to provide information to prospective foster and adoptive parents.

The licensing process includes reviewing applications presented by current and potential foster parents, conducting home studies and interviews, performing a safety check of each home, background screening, checking references, obtaining medical clearance, issuing licenses, regularly inspecting homes to ensure that homes continue to meet state standards, and updating the home study when issuing a renewal of the license.

Prospective foster parents may begin the licensing process while in training. To qualify for a license, an individual or family cannot be dependent on the foster care payment and the payment should not be a family's major source of income.

On a case-by-case basis non-safety licensing standards may be waived for a relative (kin) home in order to expedite the approval of a kinship placement. Because of this, provisional kinship licenses can usually be issued within a week.

Strategies for Training Staff to Work with Diverse Communities

Staff from UFC, OL, and DCFS receives training to help them be culturally responsive as they recruit, train, and provide ongoing support to foster and adoptive parents. Prospective foster and adoptive parents also receive training to help them work with diverse communities.

For example, DCFS implemented a two-hour Safety Guidelines for LGBTQ Clients training, which is delivered to all caseworkers and supervisors and has been added as ongoing training for new employees. During this training participants learn how to implement practice guidelines that specifically addresses the issue of safety for LGBTQ youth. Training introduces appropriate terminology, helps students understand LGBTQ issues, addresses services that help prevent removal, and identifies expectations for out-of-home placements.

Prospective foster and adoptive parents also learn about the needs of LGBTQ youth in several sections of the 32-hour training provided by the UFC. In the session where UFC trainers discuss why children are in foster/adoptive care and in the session where they learn about adolescent development, trainers identify the safety needs of children who may be questioning their sexuality. Also, when UFC trainers address the need to "transcend" differences in philosophy or beliefs with prospective foster or adoptive parents, they help parents examine their personal, moral, and ethical perspectives and help parents determine if they have the ability to work with children who live differently. A discussion of

LGBTQ youth safety is also held during the UFCs DCFS Practice Guidelines webinar, a course that parents are required to complete before being licensed. A culture of acceptance is a primary component of any placement and as such in this webinar UFC addresses issues relating to inclusiveness, safety, stability, and support for LGBTQ youth.

In addition UFC frontline staff is required to attend the same training that foster parents receive, which includes a module focused on understanding and honoring the primary families that children in foster care come from and includes a focus on racial, cultural, and socioeconomic differences.

UFC also employs a full-time Spanish-speaking Recruitment Specialist who conducts outreach to the Hispanic community along the Wasatch Front. They also employ a full-time Native American Specialist who conducts outreach to tribes and assists UFC staff statewide with American Indian/Alaskan Native recruitment efforts. The Native American Specialist also attends or assists in coordinating UFC staff attendance at a number of Native American events throughout the year, including Pow-wows, symposiums, school events, the Governor's Native American Summit, and other related events, which helps support staff learning to work in tribal communities.

Dealing with Linguistic Barriers

The language other than English that is most often spoken in Utah is Spanish. UFC employs a full-time Spanish-speaking specialist who responds to all Spanish language inquiries and provides pre-service training in Spanish for prospective foster families. The specialist also mentors Spanish-speaking families through the licensing process, assists with the Spanish language peer support group, and coordinates ongoing training for Spanish-speaking families to renew their license.

There has not been a demand for UFC classes in other languages. If the need arises, UFC would contract with a language interpretation agency to meet that need.

The state maintains a contract for translation services to overcome language barriers, which is available statewide. The contract can be accessed by OL or DCFS staff when needed for communicating with prospective or licensed foster or adoptive parents when agency staff does not speak the language.

Non-Discriminatory Fee Structures

The Office of Licensing does not charge a fee for prospective foster parents to be licensed. They do charge a fee for background screening, which is consistent for all applicants. These fees are established by the legislature each year.

Timely Search for Prospective Adoptive Parents

DCFS has established procedures in Practice Guidelines Section 402 for timely search for prospective adoptive parents for a child in foster care needing an adoptive placement, when the child is not

already in an adoptive home. Utah Code Subsection 62A-4a-205.6 requires that intensive recruitment efforts be made to place a child in an adoptive family within 30 days of the establishment of adoption as the child's permanency plan. The law requires that private adoption agencies be utilized to help in this effort. DCFS contracts with the Adoption Exchange and Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption to help with intensely recruiting for an adoptive family for every child who cannot safely return home and does not have an identified permanent family. Wendy's Wonderful Kids child-specific recruiters work throughout the state with identified children who have lingered in foster care without an identified family to increase the likelihood each child will exit foster care with a permanent family.

Strategies that may be used for timely search of a prospective adoptive parent may include the following. The child and family team helps in selecting appropriate strategies based on the child's circumstances.

- Continuing search for family of the child / kinship caregivers, including as defined by ICWA.
- Listing the child on The Adoption Exchange serving eight western states.
- Utah website family recruitment.
- Profile party recruitment.
- Utah Heart Gallery recruitment.
- Televised and print media "Wednesday's Child" recruitment.
- National AdoptUSKids recruitment.
- Database matching of the child with families on the database.

Section 402.2 of DCFS Practice Guidelines establishes priorities for selection of adoptive parents.

- Precedence is given to the Indian Child Welfare Act provision for adoption of an Indian child who is a member of a federally recognized tribe or Alaska native village.
- Relative of the child.
- Caregiver or adoptive family who has biological siblings of the child.
- Non-relative couple or single adult.

Current caregivers of the child should be considered before another prospective adoptive family would be considered, if the child has substantial emotional ties with the caregiver and if removal of the child from the caregiver would be detrimental to the child's well-being. The child's preference should also be considered if the child is of sufficient maturity. In addition, geographic barriers alone should not present barriers or delays in the selection of an adoptive home.

DCFS cannot deny to any individual the opportunity to become an adoptive parent on the basis of the race color, or national origin of the individual, or of the child, involved; or to delay or deny the placement of a child for adoption or into foster care, on the basis of the race, color, or national origin of the adoptive or foster parent, or the child involved.

APSR Update Foster and Adoptive Parent Diligent Recruitment Plan

DCFS administration continues to collaborate with the Utah Foster Care Foundation to:

- Ensure that services described in Utah Code §62A-4a-107.5(2) place emphasis on the Division’s mission to keep children safe at home with their parents, and if this is not possible, to place with kin while working on reunification with parents.
- Provide education to the foster parent(s) on their role as a member of the Child and Family Team, in keeping children safe and supporting reunification efforts. Adoption is considered only if all reunification efforts with the biological parents or kinship has failed.
- Provide consistent messaging in family recruitment, response engagement, and orientation to convey the temporary nature of foster care and the role foster parents play.
- Include “Equipping Foster Parents to Actively Support Reunification” resource from AdoptUsKids published in May 2019 in foster parent training.
- Provide education on the benefits of kinship care and maintaining familial connections, the resources and supports available to kinship caregivers from DCFS and their community, and other issues associated with children in kinship care.
- Provide support for kinship efforts in placement and connections.
- Coordinate every six months with each Region Director or designee to review, assess, and update the Regional Recruitment, Training, and Retention Plans.
 - Use the needs assessment provided by each region to develop an annual written Regional Recruitment Plan for each area.
 - Ensure family voice is included in the development of each of the Regional Recruitment, Training, and Retention Plans. Family voice includes biological family, youth, kin, and foster parents, and should include representation across racial and ethnic groups represented in Utah.
- Expand provision and flexibility of online and remote training.
- Develop and cultivate partnerships with the technology community to establish procedures for targeted recruiting, data interpretation, and marketing to prospective resource families.
- Provide opportunities for peer support to foster parents from foster parents who have experience in actively supporting reunification.
- Provide opportunities for peer support to kin families from kin families who have experience in actively supporting reunification.
- Collaborate with the Office of Licensing to start the background and application process, and coordinate with DCFS staff and the technology team to ensure accurate shared information.

On March 30, 2020, a new MOU with America Kids Belong was implemented. America Kids Belong will provide additional recruitment resources for high-risk and longest-waiting children by providing video shoots that enhance exposure and highlight the child’s specific needs, increasing their likelihood of permanency.

With the conclusion of the current contract, the Department of Human Services will issue a procurement and establish a new contract for foster and adoptive parent recruitment and training during SFY 2021.